

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4573

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 3646

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BD

SUBJECT: FARAKKA; FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT; G.K REDDY
ARTICLE

1. REPLYING TO A "CALLING ATTENTION MOTION" IN THE LOK SABHA MARCH 9, FOREIGN MINISTER Y.B CHAVAN STATED THAT THE BDG REPLY OF FEBRUARY 28 TO THE GOI NOTE OF FEBRUARY 11 PROPOSING TALKS ON FARAKKA "NEITHER ACCEPTS NOR REJECTS OUR INVITATION." THE MINISTER REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE DID NOT "TREAT THE COMMUNICATION AS A PRECONDITION" REGARDLESS OF ANY STATEMENTS BY A BDG SPOKESMAN. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT DESCRIBE THE SITUATION AS A "DEADLOCK." "WE WANT TO HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH OUR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES," CHAVAN SAID, ADDING: "OUR INVITATION IS OPEN. NOT ONLY THAT, OUR ATTITUDE IS ALSO OPEN."

2. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, CHAVAN EMPHASIZED THAT THE FARAKKA DAM PROJECT WOULD NOT BE GIVEN UP, POINTING OUT THAT 1.5 BILLION RUPEES HAD BEEN INVESTED IN THE PROJECT. CHAVAN EXPLAINED THAT THE GOI HAD CALLED THE ATTENTION OF THE BDG TO THE FACT THAT DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE
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ALLOCATION OF WATERS HAD ALWAYS BEEN CONFINED TO THE LEAN

SEASON, FROM ABOUT MID-MARCH TO ABOUT MID-MAY FOR THE REASON THAT DURING THE REST OF THE YEAR THE WATER WAS PLENTIFUL. CHAVAN REPORTEDLY WAS CATEGORICAL IN ASSERTING THAT ACCORDING TO THE BEST INFORMATION ANY WITHDRAWAL OF GANGES WATERS BY EITHER COUNTRY SHOULD NOT HAVE ANY ADVERSE EFFECT ON EITHER COUNTRY BECAUSE OF THE ABUNDANCE OF WATER THROUGHOUT THE YEAR EXCEPT IN THE LEAN SEASON. "IN FACT, NO ADVERSE EFFECTS IN BANGLADESH WERE OBSERVED DURING THE LEAN SEASON OF LAST YEAR BY INDIAN MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TEAMS OF EXPERTS SET UP UNDER THE AGREEMENT OF APRIL 1975." THE MINISTER IS FURTHER REPORTED AS SAYING: "THE IDEAL, LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF SHORTAGE IN THE GANGA DURING THE LEAN MONTHS AND FLOODS IN THE REGION AS A WHOLE IS TO WORK IN WHOLEHEARTED COOPERATION IN EVOLVING A PROJECT OR PROJECTS WHICH WOULD HARNESS THE ABUNDANT WATER RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE OF BOTH INDIA AND BANGLADESH."

3. INFLUENTIAL COLUMNIST G.K. REDDY MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ABOUT FARAKKA IN A MARCH 8 PIECE: INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER SAMR SEN SAW THE PRIME MINISTER TWICE DURING HIS (JUST CONCLUDED VISIT TO DELHI AND THIS IS INDICATIVE OF THE IMPORTANCE INDIA ATTACHES TO THE FARAKKA QUESTION WHILE SEN HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED "TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO CREATE THE NECESSARY CLIMATE FOR THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THIS PROBLEM...THE NEW AUTHORITIES IN DACCA HAVE BEEN QUEERING THE PITCH BY LAUNCHING A BIG PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN." THE BDG IS ATTEMPTING TO INTERNATIONALIZE WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A BILATERAL ISSUE BY INVITING FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO VISIT THE AFFECTED AREA. "IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS FROM THIS PROPAGANDIST LINE THAT THE PRESENT AUTHORITIES IN BANGLADESH ARE NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN AN AMICABLE SETTLEMENT." THE GOI CANNOT GIVE THE BDG A "BLANKET VETO" ON THE USE OF THE WATERS PENDING A FINAL SETTLEMENT THE GOI MUST ADOPT A POLICY COMBINING "FIRMNESS WITH FLEXIBILITY" RATHER THAN A POLICY OF "PLACATING BANGLADESH THROUGH APPEASEMENT." OTHERWISE HARDLINERS IN DACCA WILL BE EQUALLY UNREASONABLE ON OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES. THE ATTEMPT BY THE BDG TO INVOKE THE BARCELONA CONVENTION OF 1921 IS NOT VALID BECAUSE INDIA OPTED OUT

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OF IT IN 1956 AND BECAUSE IT HAS NO RELEVANCE TO THE "KIND OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY STIRRED UP OVER THE FARAKKA BARRAGE." REDDY CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS PAINFUL TO SEE THE BDG REPEAT THE ARGUMENTS WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN MADE BY PAKISTAN AND PICTURE INDIA AS A "RAPACIOUS NEIGHBOR WITH NO CONCERN AT ALL FOR ITS WELFARE."SAXBE

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